



IT'S GREAT TO BE IN COLUMBIA COUNTY!

By Ron Cross
Board of Commission Chairman



- On June 19th, Columbia County citizens will have the opportunity of voting in a referendum on the question of whether or not to allow Columbia County to exercise redevelopment powers. These redevelopment powers, among other things, allow the Board of Commissioners to create a Tax Allocation District (TAD). When a jurisdiction experiences redevelopment or new economic development, typically the value of taxable properties in that jurisdiction increases, and tax revenues collected from these properties increase. TADs work by capturing the incremental tax revenues gained from this increase in property values in a pre-designated geographic area and using these funds to retire debt or to fund further improvements on a pay-as-you-go basis. A number of Georgia counties use this financing tool (see back of page for more information). The ballot questions will read:

- () YES Shall the Act be approved which authorizes Columbia County to exercise redevelopment powers under the "Redevelopment Powers Law," as it may be amended from time to time?
- () NO

- In a few days, the Board of Commission will vote on the FY2007/08 budget. As we have done in the previous eight years, we will have a balanced budget without a tax millage increase. In fact, we will be able to rollback part of your property taxes, so you will pay just about the same amount in property taxes in 2007 as you did in 2006 even though your property was probably assessed higher this year than last year. The only area of your taxes that will not be rolled back is the percentage that is paid for fire protection. This rollback is possible because of the fiscal responsibility of the Divisions and Elected Officials as well as the increased retail and commercial tax revenue. Continue to shop Columbia County first!

- Columbia County was the first of 56 StormReady counties currently in Georgia and has been recertified recently. Requirements to become a StormReady Community outline the specific equipment, community preparedness programs, and other administrative measures that are needed to make our community safer during severe weather events. Be on the look out for new StormReady signs around the County that promote "weather safety" with our citizens.

- In an article by AT&T entitled *Digital Government*, Columbia County was featured as one of the thousands of U.S. communities rapidly expanding its commitment to high-speed internet services. The article states, "Through its website (columbiacountyga.gov), citizens can contact local officials, tax taxes, register for recreational activities, even search for a lost pet – without picking up a phone, licking a stamp, or waiting in line. Last year, the Center for Digital Government, a research institute that studies state and local governments' use of information technology, judged Columbia County's website one of the best in the nation for its presentation and ease of use. But county officials have a broader vision for their portal. 'Our goal is to build a 24/7 type of service, a government with no walls, no doors, no clocks,' says Lewis Foster, IT Manager for the county, 140 miles east of Atlanta, where the population is booming. E-government, he says, is an effective way to meet the demands of new residents without stretching the payroll. We're growing so fast we've got to find a way to offset hiring new people."

- The first year of the Columbia County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) has been a success! The CCCVB and the Development Authority of Columbia County developed a new joint website www.choosecolumbiacounty.com and a new Columbia County Visitors Guide that features a County map and a map of Clarks Hill Lake. Since April 2006, more than 4,500 visitors attended regional events in Columbia County which represents more than \$1.1 million in expenditures to the regional economy! The separation of the Chamber of Commerce from the Metro Augusta Chamber of Commerce and the separation of our CVB from the Metro Augusta CVB have greatly benefited the citizens of Columbia County. Both of these Columbia County organizations are excelling, and plans are underway for even more exciting events to come in the future!

- Do you want to know what is happening at the Board of Commission meetings? We plan to begin videotaping our BOC meetings which are held on the first and third Tuesday of each month. By mid-summer, these meetings will be available on our website (www.columbiacountyga.gov). We are equipping the auditorium with the latest video equipment to allow any meeting held there to be videotaped, if desired. Decisions will be made later whether to put the meetings on cable TV as an additional public service.

Cooling Centers

Cooling Centers are open each year from June 1st to September 30th for Columbia County residents who do not have air conditioning. All facilities are handicapped accessible and offer at least a sitting room and ice water. Please call the facility for specific accommodations:

Bessie Thomas Community Center 5913 Euchee Creek Drive, Grovetown 706-556-0308	Monday – Friday 8 AM – 5 PM
Eubanks Blanchard Community Center 6868 Cobbham Road, Appling 706-309-9451	Monday – Friday 9 AM – 6 PM
Laurel & Hardy Museum 250 N. Louisville Street, Harlem 706-556-0043	Tuesday – Saturday 10 AM – 4 PM
Wesley United Methodist Church 825 N. Belair Road, Evans 706-869-0888	Monday – Thursday 9 AM – 5 PM
Patriot's Park 5445 Columbia Road, Grovetown 706-863-7523	Monday – Thursday 9 AM – 9 PM Friday – Saturday 9 AM – 6 PM Sunday 1 PM – 6 PM

TAD Referendum

On April 18, 2007, Governor Purdue signed into law an Act passed by the General Assembly to authorize Columbia County to exercise redevelopment powers under the Georgia Redevelopment Powers Law. The Act requires that to be effective this authorization must be approved in a referendum of the Columbia County voters which will be held June 19, 2007. The Redevelopment Powers Law would give the Board of Commissioners of Columbia County the power to establish Redevelopment Areas in the unincorporated areas of the County that are in need of development, redevelopment, or revitalization through the installation of needed infrastructure, the building or renovation of buildings and other facilities and/or the removal of blight in the area.

The Board of Commissioners would also have the authority to create a Tax Allocation District (TAD) within all or a portion of a Redevelopment Area. It is anticipated that this development or redevelopment would cause the value of property in the designated area to increase which would cause the amount of taxes received by the County from the owners of property in the designated area to increase. The increase in County ad valorem taxes for this Tax Allocation District above the amount previously collected in this area at the time of creation of the TAD as well as any other taxes specified by the Board of Commissioners would be used to repay tax allocation bonds that could be issued to finance the improvements in the Tax Allocation District. Taxes for the Board of Education could be used for this purpose only with the agreement of the Board of Education.

Prevent Auto Break-ins

By Columbia County Sheriff's Office



- Lock it and pocket your keys. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them. Lock the trunk, the hatchback, or the tailgate of a station wagon or sport utility vehicle.
- If your motor vehicle is an older model, replace standard door lock buttons with tapered ones. These replacements are inexpensive and much more difficult to pry up.
- Never hide a second set of keys in the vehicle. Extra keys can easily be found if the thief takes time to look. Store spare key in your wallet or purse.
- If possible, avoid parking next to vans, pick-up trucks, and other large vehicles. These large vehicles can hide your car and make it more difficult for others to observe.
- Periodically check your license plates to make sure they haven't been stolen, switched, or altered.
- Whenever possible, park in a well lighted and busy areas.
- Whenever possible, park in an attended lot. Motor vehicle thieves do not like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
- On cold mornings, never leave your motor vehicle running unattended in order to warm the vehicle up.
- Avoid transferring items to the trunk of a vehicle where it is parked. A thief may be watching. Checkbooks, credit cards, or other credentials, which a thief could misuse, should not be left in a motor vehicle.
- Park as close as possible to your home or the business that you will be entering.
- Don't leave packages or valuables (e.g., cellular phones, CD players, etc.) in sight. Take valuables with you or put them under your seat.
- Don't disconnect the buzzer that warns of keys left in the ignition. It's for your protection.
- **ALWAYS LOCK YOUR VEHICLE!!**

June Community Calendar

- 2 *Georgia Reptiles and Amphibians* – grades 2-8 at 4 PM at the Reed Creek Wetlands Interpretative Center. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Call 706-210-4027 for more information.
- 7 *Time to Draw Manga Characters* – ages 12-18 from 3-5 PM at Main Library – call 706-447-7660 to pre-register
- 8 *If Ever You Are Lost: Martial Arts* - ages 12-18 from 2-3 PM at Main Library – call 706-447-7660 to pre-register
- 13 *Monkey Around at the Library* - ages 12-18 from 2-4:30 PM at Main Library – call 706-447-7660 to pre-register
- 16 *Georgia Reptiles and Amphibians* – grades 2-8 at 4 PM at the Reed Creek Wetlands Interpretative Center. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Call 706-210-4027 for more information.
- 18 *Lost for Time? Head to Toe Beauty* - ages 12-18 from 2-4 PM at Main Library – call 706-447-7660 to pre-register
- 20 *Monkey Around at the Library* - ages 12-18 from 2-4:30 PM at Main Library – call 706-447-7660 to pre-register
- 21 *Chad Crews Magical Storyteller* – all ages at 7 PM at Main Library- call 706-447-7657 to pre-register